

IN DEDICATION TO DR. ARNULF MERKER

Arnulf Merker died in September, 2010, at the age of 65. He was appointed to the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) at Alnarp and specialized in plant breeding. In 1990, Arnulf became professor at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala; in 1997 it tied him to the SLU unit at Alnarp, i.e., moving him back to Skåne.

Arnulf was born in Czechoslovakia during World War II. His father was a Sudeten German and his mother Swedish. The family fled to Sweden and lived for the first few years in northern Sweden. In 1950, the family moved to Helsingborg, where his father was working as an agronomist. He received his particular interest in biology and nature from his father Helmut Merker, the first employee at the Botanical Garden of Lund and later head of the Frederick Valley Gardens in Helsingborg.

After basic studies in biology, chemistry, and geology at Lund University, Arnulf's interest was captured by genetics. Consequently, he received his Ph.D. degree in genetics from Lund University in 1973. His thesis focused on chromosome studies in triticales under the guidance of the famous Prof. A. Müntzing. From 1974 he was employed by the Swedish Seed Association, followed by a successful postdoctoral period at the International Maize and Wheat Research Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico. He published many papers on the cytogenetic instability of triticales, resulting in the discovery of spontaneous wheat-rye chromosome substitutions in Mexican spring triticales. His first Swedish triticales variety, Uno, was released in 1990. For this, he received the Scanian Lantmännen award for having established triticales as a crop in Sweden. He continued as plant breeder and researcher at Svalöv AB until 1990.



A. Merker (right) on a field excursion during the International Rye Conference, Rostock, Germany, 2007.

Arnulf's main research was related to triticales and rye and utilization of wild species in breeding of wheat, rye, and barley. Dr. Merker was linked to the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences as an assistant professor in the Department of Plant Breeding in 1986 and was appointed in 1990 as professor of plant breeding with placement at the Swedish Agricultural University in Ultuna (Uppsala), and later in Svalöv and Alnarp. His contribution to rye and wheat research continued throughout his career. Induced alien introgressions and domestication of crop plants has been widely reported. He had great interest in wheat hybrids with wild perennial wheat relatives, *Leymus arenarius*, *L. mollis*, *L. racemosus*, and *Thinopyrum junceiforme*, which was part of an inspiring collaboration with Kesara Ananthawat-Jónsson. By selection in wild populations and interspecific hybrids, he produced several prebreeding lines of great agronomical potential.

During recent years, he was heavily involved in international projects with graduate students from Africa, Central America, and Asia with a focus was on local crops, such as cereal tef, wheat, cabbage, and oilseed guizotia from Ethiopia; sesame in Southeast Asia; and indigenous forms of maize in Nicaragua. During the last years, he was able to lead a very large project in Central Asia to building modern seed and plant breeding activities.

An important part of his professional achievement was teaching at different levels. He became strongly involved in basic education of genetics and plant breeding at University of Agricultural Sciences, where he was a very popular teacher. Arnulf was elected to the Royal Physiographic Society of Sweden, Lund, and, in 2002, he received the National Agriculture and Forestry Academy Award for exemplary contributions to research information. For several years he was a member of the Swedish Gene Technology Advisory Board.

Arnulf Merker also was one of the most politically active students in Lund during the 1960s. He started as a radical pacifist and was sentenced to prison for draft resistance. He was then involved in FNL groups and was against the U.S. war in Vietnam. In the 1980s, he sat for a few years on the Höganäs City Council as a representative of the 'Left'. In recent years, and as a professor of plant breeding, Arnulf was challenged by radical forces, such as Greenpeace and organic farmers, who wanted to stop the development of genetically modified crops. On the contrary, he argued that genetic engineering can make farming more environmentally friendly and that resistance against it is due to ignorance.

Since 1997, Arnulf was living in Malmö. He is survived by his wife Ann-Charlotte Alverfors, sons Emil and Pål, stepdaughter Rebecca, and their families. Arnulf Merker's legacy will remain in memory of all his students, colleagues and friends.

Rolf Schlegel, Gatersleben, Germany & Kesara Ananthawat-Jónsson, Reykjavik, Iceland.